

LESSONS ON ENVIRONMENTAL CHANGE FROM THE PACIFIC ISLANDS

Development, Sustainability & Resilience



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A region in transition: Pacific Realities

Multiple Realities | Agendas | Tensions

- Pacific Crises – imminent, multifaceted
- A beast, growing in magnitude and exacerbated by both ignorance and a general lack of political will.
- Vulnerability in all spheres of life: social, to economic, political and environmental.

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Legacies:

Twisted pasts | Distorted futures

- Christianity
- Colonialism
- Education
- Development
- Modernization and globalization: strain on local communities, changes in lifestyle, values, beliefs, behaviours and practices.
- Contemporary society driven by consumerism and commodification
- Development agenda today – lip-service to SD - inconsiderate of resource depletion and or socio-cultural, and socio-ecological costs.

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Development Issues

- Economic development the priority
- Overriding belief that Ec. Dev will bring about financial security that will help alleviate other national/regional issues
- Backdrop of dependency on the developed world/ global north for (a) development models; and (b) financial and technical assistance
- General lack of understanding by the grassroots on the gravity of the ecological crisis and the development context
- Education systems only now beginning to emphasize Environment Education but focus is primarily on Climate Change

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Ecological concerns

- Development and population growth continues to put a strain on already vulnerable natural resources
- Human impact on the environment may be irreversible
- Loss of biodiversity is an on-going concern
- Natural disasters pose a continuous threat
- Long-term impact of climate change could result in the loss of entire island states

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More of the same news...

"The projected impacts of climate change cross all sectors and the vulnerability and low adaptive capacity of SIDS is inextricably linked to the socio-cultural and economic context of these island States ...vulnerabilities include low availability of resources, a small but rapidly growing population, remoteness, susceptibility to natural disasters, excessive dependence on international trade, and vulnerability to global developments" (UN Impacts, Vulnerabilities & Adaptation in Developing Countries 2007, p.24).

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The verdict is always the same...

Six Climate Threats, and the 12 Countries Most at Risk

	Low Income	Middle Income		
Drought			Storm	Coastal Inundation
Malawi	Bangladesh	Philippines	All low-lying island states	Sudan
Ethiopia	China	Bangladesh	Vietnam	Senegal
Zimbabwe	India	Madagascar	Egypt	Zimbabwe
India	Cambodia	Vietnam	Tunisia	Mali
Mozambique	Mozambique	Moldova	Indonesia	Zambia
Niger	Laos	Mongolia	Mountania	Morocco
Mauritania	Pakistan	Haiti	China	Niger
Eritrea	Sri Lanka	Maldives	Mexico	India
Sudan	Thailand	Japan	Myanmar	Malawi
Chad	Vietnam	China	Bangladesh	Algeria
Kenya	Benin	Honduras	Senegal	Ethiopia
Iran	Rwanda	Yemen	Libya	Pakistan

Source: World Bank

UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (2014) See: <http://www.irinnews.org/report/85179/global-twelve-countries-on-climate-change-hit-list/>

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Sustainability vs. Sustainable Development

- Very little public discourse on sustainability
- Much is said about SD by politicians & academics
- Recognition of the need to localise the conversation e.g. indigenous/vernacular concepts of sustainability/SD
- No real comprehension of what we are sustaining, developing and for what purpose? For whose benefit?

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Major Challenges

- Continued bad farming practice
- Extractive industries
- Loss of indigenous knowledge and practice of sustainable living
- Over-emphasis on the Western 'science' of CC
- Minimal to nil use of the media for advocacy and education
- Implications of increasing trade relations with Asia

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What the present and future holds

- Quality of water
- Soil
- Droughts
- Flooding
- Sea level rise
- Hygiene & basic health
- Food security
- Extreme events – frequency of and intensity of tropical cyclones and coral bleaching
- Loss of endemic species of flora and fauna

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What have we learned?

1. We are vulnerable but not powerless
2. Natural resources - Developmental capital or Cultural wealth & Human Security?
3. Growing populations - shrinking land mass
4. Developmental agendas vs sustainable living
5. Change is coming and action is imperative
6. Solutions must be home grown & 'ownership' is critical
7. Education is at the heart of the resilience movement

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Some responses

- Numerous international projects and national programmes on climate change adaptation, mitigation and disaster preparedness
- Kiribati looking at proactive responses – purchase of land in Fiji for food security (2013- 14)
- Tuvalu – biogas (2012)
- Fiji – CCintegration across the curriculum
- Increased international and regional research projects to “understand” the context and scope the “realities”
- Increased forums and conferences on CC

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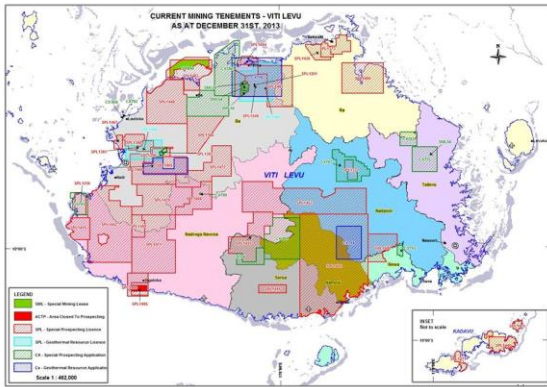
Taking a personal stand...



"Pictured is [Jerry Maiki Tengemoana](#) who posted this under his personal page in protest against some bauxite mining initiatives that are in the closest steps to be established as operations on his Ancestors, Great Grandfather and Grandfather's land..."
 Gary Scott Hatigeve – Pacific Environmental Information Network (PEIN) – FB Post June 27, 2014.

Dr. [Jack Maebuta](#) Jerry I'm with you my bro. You are not alone. I have been fighting the same with the seabed mining in Temotu.

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Making a strong statement

Greenpeace
 Pacific office
 Poster, 2013



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Fiji: Wasawasa Festival of Oceans 2008, 2009.

Collab, btwn Environmental groups and NGOs with artists and the wider community in particular children

**Tuvalu: King Tide Festival, 2010
"Tuvalu E! The Tide is High!"**

National initiative to raise awareness about what will be lost if Tuvalu were submerged by the rising sea levels. Activities included raising awareness about CC to adults and children



Mama Hanua: Mothers' of the land

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Lavalava poetry and Turtles and Birds Exhibition, 2009

International year of biodiversity, July 2009. Funded by French Embassy, Suva for the PYC and jointly hosted by USP OCACPS and FAC, Suva.

Tsunami Feather Appeal, 2009

Tsunami Feather Appeal included Auction, Art Community resp. fundraiser art extravaganza and informal workshops Example of art bringing people together – in less than 2 weeks raised close to \$23,000

Visual Arts Workshop, Tonga 2010

"Environmental Change: the work of man and the assault of nature" Tonga outreach program. Funding Pacific Conf. of Churches, Secretariat of the Pacific Community & local private sector.

Earth Day 2010: Tangata Fenua. Tangata Moana.

People of the Land. People of the Sea. USP Oceania Centre response to Earth Hour/Day An attempt at promoting contemporary Pacific art and culture by localizing an internationally recognized event

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Antagonist Art for advocacy and Awareness, 2009



Expanding the Discourse, 2010



Oceans, Islands and Skies: Climate Change and Creativity Conference, 2010

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